

# RV Consumer e-Magazine

**April 2015**

**Volume 5**

**Issue 4**



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**Is your RV Ready for  
2015?**

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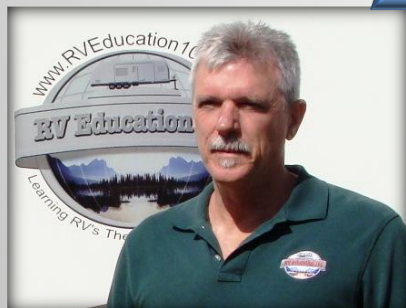
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Is your RV ready for 2015?

We might be ready for another great year of camping, but is the RV ready, especially after sitting in storage for a few months.

Not only do you need to contend with the storage issue, but I personally was aware of some other issues with the RV when I parked it last winter. I distinctly recall telling myself I will deal with it next spring. Well guess what, it's time to deal with it!

My plan is to work off the list of things I know were wrong with the RV when I put it in storage, and then go through my annual ritual of RV spring preparation.

Let's look at some preventive maintenance you can do to get the RV ready for the 2015 camping season.

~ Mark

## RV Consumer Magazine

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# RV Education 101 Product Catalog



Our digital RV Product Catalog puts all of our RV training products in one place, and we separate what products apply to what type of RV. For example if you own a travel trailer you can browse through the single DVD titles or go directly to the DVD value sets that apply specifically to travel trailers.

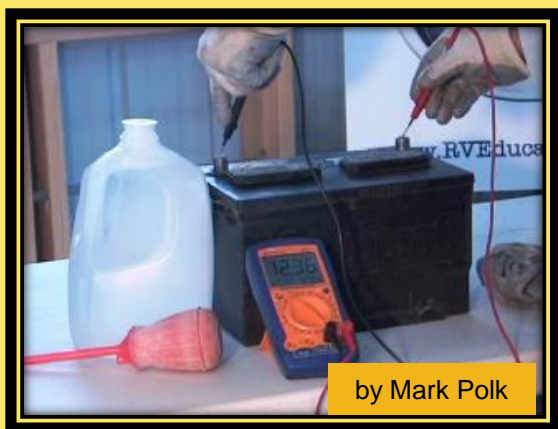
This helps accomplish two things; it eliminates the guess work as to which DVD titles go together, and it saves the RV consumer a significant amount of money with our DVD box set discounts. Our goal at RV Education 101 is simple, to help RV owners until they are comfortable operating and using their RV, and to make their entire RV experience safe, fun and stress free. [Browse the product catalog now](#)

## Enjoy the RV Journey In 2015



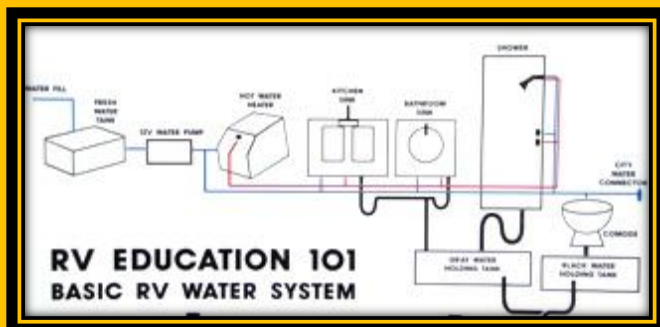
# Post Winter RV Check-Up

Your house-on-wheels sat in storage for several months this winter and now it's time for another camping season. What do you check to make sure the RV is safe and ready to use when you head out on your first RV trip of the season? There are lots of preventive maintenance checks you can perform, but here are some checks I consider essential.



**Batteries:** Start your post-winter checks with the batteries since it's possible you removed them for winter storage. The condition of the batteries is dependent on how well they were cared for over the cold winter months. Batteries in storage will lose a percentage of current through internal leakage. It's not uncommon for a battery to discharge up to 10% a month when it is in storage. If you checked and recharged the batteries periodically while in storage they should be ready to go. If not, the first step is to fully charge the batteries.

Water should only be added to lead acid batteries after fully charging the battery, unless the water level is already below the plates. The plates need to be covered at all times. After the battery is fully charged check and add distilled water as required. If the batteries were removed for storage reinstall them making absolutely sure they are connected properly.

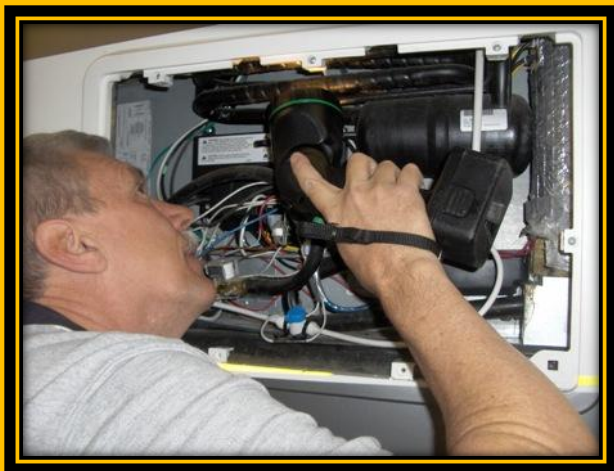


## RV Water System

### De-winterize / Leaks / Sanitize

Depending on how the unit was winterized it needs to be de-winterized. If you used non-toxic RV antifreeze to protect the water system you need to run fresh water through the entire system until all traces of the antifreeze are removed. Hopefully no antifreeze was added to the fresh water holding tank. If it was, the first step is to drain any remnants from the tank. Add potable water to the fresh water holding tank, turn the water pump on and open all of the water faucets. When clear water is running through the system turn the pump off and close the faucets. Take the water heater out of the by-pass mode (if applicable). If the water heater wasn't bypassed the antifreeze needs to be drained from the water heater tank.

At this point I like to sanitize the water system. Make sure all of the drains are closed and drain plugs are installed. Take a quarter-cup of household bleach for every fifteen gallons of water your fresh water tank holds. Mix the bleach with water into a one-gallon container and pour it into the fresh water holding tank. Fill the fresh water holding tank completely full of water. Turn the water pump on and run water through all hot and cold faucets until you smell the bleach. Close the faucets and let it sit for twelve hours. Drain all of the water and re-fill the tank with potable water. Turn the water pump on and open all faucets, running the water until you no longer smell any bleach. It may be necessary to repeat this process to eliminate all signs of bleach. Reinstall any water filters that were removed.



**Appliance Checks:** Open the LP gas valve and check the operation of all LP gas fired appliances. Make sure the water heater tank is full of water before testing the water heater. If an LP gas appliance is not operating properly

have it inspected by an authorized RV service facility. Insects are attracted to the odorant added to LP gas and nests can affect the appliance from operating properly.

**Note:** *The LP gas system should have a leak test and gas operating pressure test preformed annually. These tests should be performed by an authorized RV repair facility.*

Plug the unit into a reliable source of electricity and test 120-volt appliances and accessories for proper operation.

**Note:** Make sure you have an adequate electrical source (30-50 amps) depending on your unit, before testing items like the microwave and roof air conditioner(s). After checking the refrigerator in the LP gas mode turn it off, and with the doors open allow sufficient time for it to return to room temperature before checking it in the electric mode.



**Tire Check:** Just like a battery loses a percentage of charge in storage, tires lose a percentage of air pressure. Your tires can lose 2-3 psi a month while sitting in storage. Check the tire pressure with a quality tire inflation gauge and



adjust the inflation pressure to the manufacturer's recommendation based on the load. Remember failing to maintain correct tire pressure, based on the load, can result in fast tread wear, uneven wear, poor handling, and excessive heat build-up which can lead to tire failure. Tire manufacturers publish load and inflation tables that should be followed for proper inflation pressure.



**RV or Tow Vehicle Engine:** Check all fluid levels. Check the transmission, power steering, engine coolant, engine oil, windshield washer and brake fluid. Consult your vehicle owner's manual for proper levels. If a fluid level is low try to determine why and correct the problem. Service the engine and engine fluid levels according to specified intervals found in the owner's manual. Start the engine and check for proper readings on all gauges. Check the operation of all lights. Make sure the vehicle emissions or inspection is up to date.

If you have a generator check the oil level in the generator. Service the generator according to specified

intervals found in the owner's manual. Inspect the generator exhaust system for any damage prior to starting. Never run a generator with a damaged exhaust system. If you didn't run the generator during storage start and run it for about two hours with at least a half-rated load. Check your generator owner's manual for load ratings. If you didn't use a fuel stabilizer and the generator won't start, or continues to surge after starting, have it checked out and repaired by an authorized service facility.



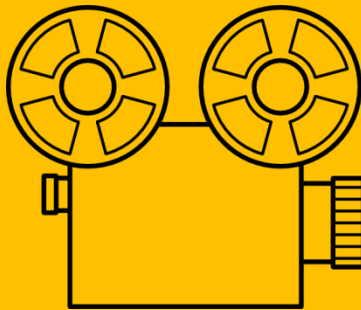
**Seams & Sealants:** If you didn't inspect the seams and sealants for potential leaks prior to storage, or if the RV was stored outdoors this is a good time to do it. I recommend inspecting and resealing seams and sealants at least twice a year and possibly more often, depending on conditions. Inspect all roof and body seams and around any openings cut into the RV for signs of cracking or damage. Reseal any seams or sealants that show signs of cracking or separation. It's important you consult your RV owner's manual, or RV dealer for sealants compatible



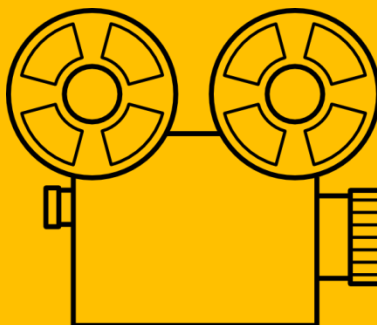
With the types of materials you are attempting to seal. If you don't feel comfortable performing the inspections, or repairing seams and sealants, have the maintenance performed by an authorized service facility. **Caution:** Be extremely careful working on the RV roof. A fall can result in serious injury or death.

**RV Safety Checks:** Re-install any dry-cell batteries or fuses that were removed for storage. If batteries were not removed from safety devices replace them with new batteries now. Test the operation of the carbon monoxide detector, LP gas leak detector and smoke alarm. Check the expiration dates on all detectors and replace detectors as required. Inspect all fire extinguishers to make sure they are fully charged. If you have dry powder fire extinguishers shake and tap on the bottom to release the powder from the bottom.

These are what I consider essential post-winter checks so your RV is ready to roll when you are. You can add to this list and tailor it to your specific needs. Be safe and have a great 2015 camping season. ~ **RV 101**



[How to Test your RV Batteries](#)



[RV Pre-Trip Checks](#)

# Q&A with Mark

## Question:

Really enjoy the website and your articles. I own a 2010 RV with a Norcold fridge and wanted to ask you whether it was a good idea or not to turn the refrigerator off during the months we don't use the RV. We are fortunate enough to keep our RV at our house where I have it plugged in most of the time. Thanks in advance.

## Answer:

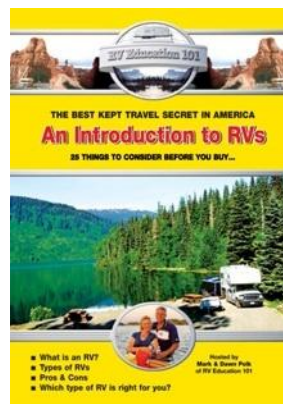
Yes, definitely turn the refrigerator off when you are not using it, and leave the doors propped open to prevent any mold or odor issues. We put some baking soda in the compartments to assist with controlling odors.

P.S. If you have lead acid batteries in your RV, and you leave the RV plugged into electricity the majority of the time check and adjust the water levels in the batteries periodically. The constant charging from the RV converter charger can deplete water levels, even with a three-stage charger. ~ RV101

For more great RV information between magazine issues check out [Mark's Blog](#)

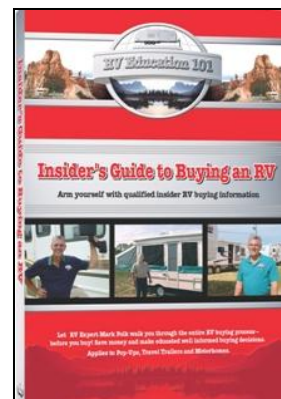
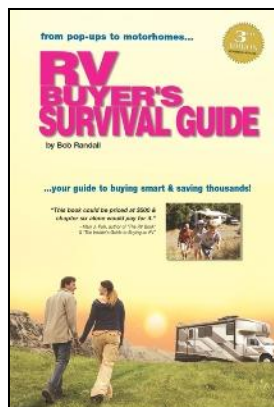
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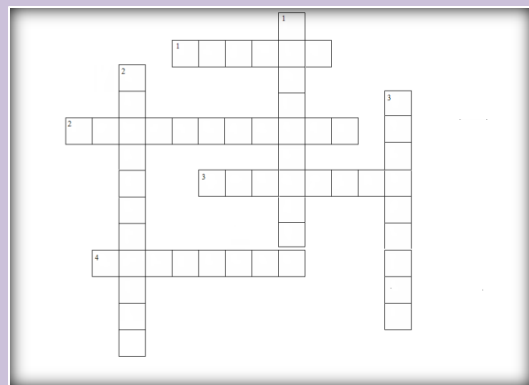
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# RV EXTERIOR MAINTENANCE



By Mark Polk

If I said it once I said it a hundred times, RVs are a major investment like your house or automobile. To protect your investment and get many years of reliable service and use from your RV there are certain measures you need to take. One important measure is maintaining the exterior of your RV. As time passes the roof and exterior of your RV begins to show signs of wear caused by constant

exposure to the elements. Ozone in the air and ultraviolet (UV) rays from the sun start to take its toll, which is first evident by signs of fading paint. The ozone in the air also causes products like rubber and vinyl to dry out, crack, and begin to deteriorate. The UV rays from the sun make this aging process happen quicker. If at all possible try to keep your RV covered when not using it, to help protect it from Mother Nature.

Maintaining the exterior of your RV contributes to extending the life of the RV and protecting your investment. If you let your RV go, without cleaning it for periods of time, it can be very difficult to get that new look back again. Maintaining the exterior of your RV primarily consists of routine inspections, cleaning and lubricating items on the RV.

To extend the life of the exterior wash the RV frequently using a mild soap and water solution. You should always try to wash your RV after returning from a trip. Do not use harsh or abrasive cleaners. When washing the RV avoid spraying water directly into any appliance vents.

Metal sidewall finishes require routine maintenance to keep black streaks cleaned from the surface. If black streaks stay on metal sidewall finishes for prolonged periods of time it can be extremely difficult to clean or remove them. Use a commercial cleaner (hint: I use Reliable One spray cleaner). **Note:** Test all cleaning solutions on a small portion of the RV's graphics before using.





Waxing the exterior of your RV can be a difficult job, but it will help extend the life of your RV. Wax the exterior with a quality wax formulated for the type of exterior surface your RV has.

Always follow the manufacturer's instructions. Exercise caution when waxing around graphics on the RV. You should wax the RV when water no longer beads on the wall surface.

Water damage on an RV is similar to progressive damage to a tire. The outside of the tire looks fine, but the internal damage over a long period of time causes the tire to fail without any warning. The outside of your RV looks fine but the internal damage caused by water over a long period of time can result in the entire roof, floor or wall rotting away without you knowing it. Inspecting **any and all** sealants can help prevent expensive repairs caused by water damage.

You must look very closely for any cracks, gaps, and loose or aged sealants. Inspect the roof, sidewalls, end caps, moldings, windows, compartments and anywhere the manufacturer cut a hole in the RV. Inspect the interior for any signs of water damage. Look for discoloration or wrinkles in the wall panels or wallpaper and feel for any soft spots on the walls, around all windows, doors, vents, slide outs, or any other openings that were cut in the RV

sidewalls. **Note:** Always use the proper type of sealant to make repairs; if you're not sure what type of sealant to use talk to an authorized RV repair facility. Have any water damage repaired immediately.

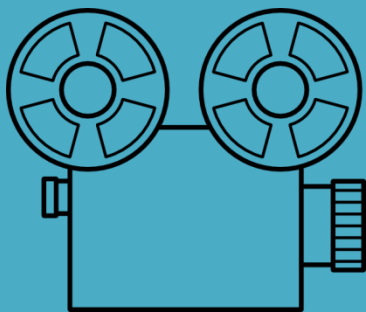
RV manufacturers use different materials to construct RV roofs. Consult your owner's manual for the type of roofing material used and for the type of soap or detergent required to clean the roof. Keeping debris such as leaves, tree sap and branches off of the roof will help to extend the life of the roofing material. You should clean and inspect your RV roof several times a year.

**Caution:** Exercise caution whenever you are on the roof of your RV. A fall can result in serious injury or death. If you are not comfortable working on the RV roof have your roof maintenance performed by an authorized RV service center.

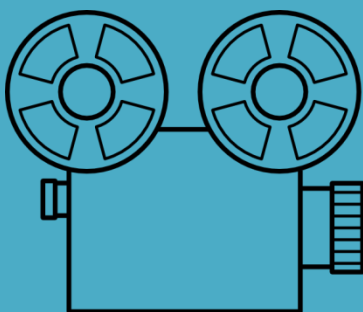
When cleaning the roof keep the sides of the RV rinsed off to avoid soap residue, streaking and any damage to decals, graphics or the paint finish. Never use cleaners containing petroleum solvents, harsh abrasives, or citric based acids on rubber or vinyl roofs. Cleaning the roof is only part of maintaining it. Every time you clean the roof inspect the sealants around all of the openings and seams on the roof. Water will take the path of least resistance and if there is the smallest opening it will find it. Reseal any areas where you suspect a leak. Only use sealants that are compatible with your roofing material.

**~ RV 101**

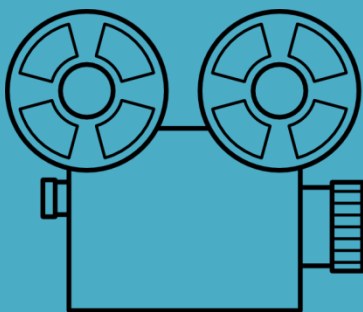
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*The guy from Ed's Towing.  
Spent three hours with him.*



*Cook's Field, the week after we  
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# RV Awning Tune-Up

By Mark Polk

Awnings are a great accessory to have on your RV, and they are available in a variety of types and styles. From self-storing bag style awnings to 12-volt power awnings, each type serves a different purpose. There are window and door awnings that provide us with shade, keep rain away from the RV windows or entry door, and protect the interior fabrics and upholstery from damage by the sun. There are slide-out awnings that protect the slide-out roof from debris and water, and there are patio awnings.

With another camping season right around the corner now is a good time to give your RV awnings a good once over.

## **The Awning Fabric:**

Perhaps the most important component of an awning is the fabric. Fabric used on RV awnings is basically one of two types, acrylic or vinyl.

Acrylic fabric is a woven cloth that lets air circulate through the fabric. This air circulation allows the fabric to dry quickly when it gets wet. Acrylic fabrics are water repellent, but not waterproof.

Vinyl awning fabric is a solid waterproof fabric. Vinyl fabric is very durable and works well for RV applications. Vinyl awning fabrics are mildew resistant, but not necessarily mildew proof. Mildew can form on the



dirt and dust that collects on the fabric. When you open the awning for the first time each year, or if it has been stored for awhile, you will need to inspect the awning fabric for any signs of mildew (vinyl fabric), stains or other damage. If the awning fabric is clean, and in good shape, normal cleaning is pretty simple.

## **Cleaning Awning Fabrics:**

To prevent dirt from imbedding into the woven fabric you should simply hose the fabric off on a monthly basis. If you ever store the fabric when it's wet, unroll it as soon as possible and allow it to thoroughly dry before storing it again. This is especially true for vinyl fabrics, to help prevent mildew.

Eventually the awning fabric will require a thorough cleaning. For more difficult stains, mildew, or cleaning I use a commercial RV awning cleaner. If it's an acrylic fabric, spray the cleaner thoroughly on the awning



fabric, roll it up and let it sit for several minutes. This helps distribute the cleaner over the entire surface of the awning fabric and allows the cleaner time to work. Open the awning and thoroughly rinse both sides of the fabric. Avoid scrubbing acrylic awning fabric. Scrubbing can remove the water retardant finish. For stubborn stains blot the cleaner on the fabric with a sponge or soft cloth.



I mentioned a moment ago that vinyl awning fabric is mildew resistant, but not necessarily mildew proof. Mildew can form on the dirt and dust that collects on the fabric. It will be worse in high temperatures, humidity and if the fabric is stored when it is wet. Apply the awning cleaner in the same fashion, roll it up and let it sit for several minutes. Open the awning and thoroughly rinse both sides of the fabric. **Note:** To clean mildew or stains it may be necessary to scrub a vinyl fabric with a soft bristle brush before rinsing. Never use oil based or abrasive cleaners on awning fabrics.

Clean and thoroughly rinse both sides of the awning fabric. ***Carefully follow all awning and cleaner manufacturer directions for the type of fabric you have.***

### Inspecting the Awning:

When you have the fabric out for cleaning it's a good time to inspect it for any rips, tears or punctures in the fabric. This would be a good time to mention you should always make sure the awning is raised high enough before opening the screen door or entry door. This is the most common cause for wearing and tears in the awning fabric, when the RV door rubs against it.



The good news is most awning fabric tears can be easily repaired. I keep a roll of RV awning repair tape, (available at most camping supply stores), in an outside compartment of the RV. It's easy to apply, invisible, and permanent. Another thing I really like about the repair tape is that it's not just for awnings. You can use it to repair tents, pool liners, canvas, inflatable boats and many other items. This tape is similar to duct tape, never leave home without it.



## Awning Hardware Inspection:

✓ Check the lag screws in the top and bottom awning brackets for secure mounting. The bottom awning brackets support most of the load from the awning.



✓ Inspect the arm pivot holes for any enlarged holes or any broken rivets in the lift handles.



✓ Lubricate the lift handles and other moving parts with a silicone spray. I use a product called Boeshield T-9



✓ Check for a warped roller tube. If the roller tube is warped it will be noticeable when you roll the awning out.



✓ Inspect the awning end caps for secure mounting and broken rivets.  
**Warning:** Never attempt to remove the awning end caps. Spring tension can result in serious injury.



✓ Have any damaged or broken parts repaired before using the awning.  
~RV101

These RV awning tips are from our [RV Awning Use, Care, & Accessories DVD](#)

# RV Shakedown Trip



## **You just bought an RV, now what?**

You researched it, found a dealer, ordered it, waited for it and the big day finally arrived; the day you get to bring your new RV home. The excitement and anticipation can be overwhelming, and then suddenly there it is sitting in the driveway. What do you do now?

Well before you jump in and head out on a cross-country RV trip let's think about this for a minute. The dealership you purchased the RV from is required to perform what is known as a Pre Delivery Inspection, or PDI on the RV prior to you taking delivery of the unit. A PDI is a safety/operational check to make sure all of the systems and appliances are operating properly, and that your new RV is ready to go camping.

These PDIs are quite thorough and for the most part technicians will catch and repair any deficiencies noted during the inspection. With that said RVs are very complex, with wiring and plumbing systems routed throughout the walls, roof and undercarriage of the RV. So it

is possible for some potential problems to be missed during the PDI process. This is why I always recommend taking a short, close to home shakedown trip, before venturing out on a longer RV trip. When I say close to home it could be in your backyard or at a local campground close to where you live. All you really need is access to water and electricity to give the new RV a good once-over.

Some RV dealers offer to let you spend a night or two camping at or close to the dealership before taking the RV home. They hook you up to a water and electrical supply and you get to test the unit, making sure everything operates properly.

Regardless of where this shakedown trip takes place it serves several purposes:

- 1) Taking a shakedown trip allows you to identify any problems and have repairs made while you are still close to home. It is much easier to have your dealership make repairs than it is to find a repair facility when you are traveling. During the shakedown trip keep an eye

out for things like water leaks or other shortcomings and for simple things like a cabinet or drawer that needs to be adjusted. Keep a pen and paper close by so you can make notes about any repairs that need to be accomplished.

2) Next a shakedown cruise will let you know what you forgot to pack, so you don't forget it when it's time for that two-month long cross-country RV trip. Again, keep a pen and paper close at hand and write down whatever comes to mind in the way of personal gear and supplies you just can't live without when you are camping.

3) A shakedown trip gives you an opportunity to try all of the onboard systems and familiarize yourself with how things work on the RV. I also recommend you purchase an [RV training DVD](#) specific to the type you of RV you buy to assist in learning about your new RV. The more you know about it the more enjoyable your RV experiences will be.

If you find any shortcomings during the shakedown trip schedule an appointment with the dealership to have the required repairs made. When you take the RV in for repairs go over all of your concerns with the service writer. Point everything out on the RV so they understand exactly what you are talking about and they can expedite the repairs.

When you get the RV back the only thing left to do is plan your trip, load it up, hook it up and go have fun! **~RV101**

# RV Education 101 YouTube Channel



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You can subscribe to our channel and get notified every time we post a new video. We currently have over 220 RV Education 101 produced videos posted on our channel with over 14,000 subscribers and 4,000,000 video views.

It's a great place to sharpen up on your RV skills and learn more about how to use and maintain your RV.



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# Getting to



## Green RV Series Pt.3 Campground Tips

In [part 1](#) and [part 2](#) of our green RV series we discussed some green RV initiatives we can take prior to leaving on a trip and when we are using the systems on our RV when we arrive at our camping destination. In our green RV series finale we were going to discuss what we as campers can do to contribute to the green RV experience during our stay at the campground. This includes topics like energy savings, water savings, recycling, and using eco-friendly tank treatments and cleaning supplies.

One of my favorite parts of camping and RVing is enjoying what the great outdoors has to offer. To ensure future generations can enjoy the same experiences we do it's important we all do our part when we go camping. Everything we do, regardless of how small it may seem, matters. In no particular order here are some easy green camping tips from our friends at KOA.

➤ Do not cut branches from live trees for firewood, and do not drive nails in live trees for clothes lines or other uses. Lots of campgrounds sell firewood.

Always check with the campground for fire and firewood policies. Shot of fire ring and any firewood or signs.

➤ Always use environmentally friendly and septic safe holding tank treatments and only use the recommended amount. Use toilet paper designed for use in RVs. It breaks down quicker and helps the campground septic system. The future of campground sewer systems and dump stations depend on us doing our part.

➤ Use bicycles to get around the campground rather than a vehicle.

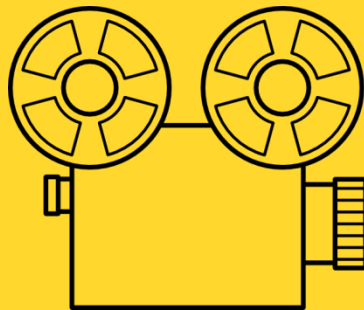
➤ As part of the green initiative and campground etiquette keep your camping area clean. Always leave the campsite in the condition you found it or better.

➤ In an effort to conserve water take shorter showers and avoid letting the water run constantly while brushing your teeth or shaving.

➤ Always clean up after your pets to reduce potential runoff into local streams and waterways.

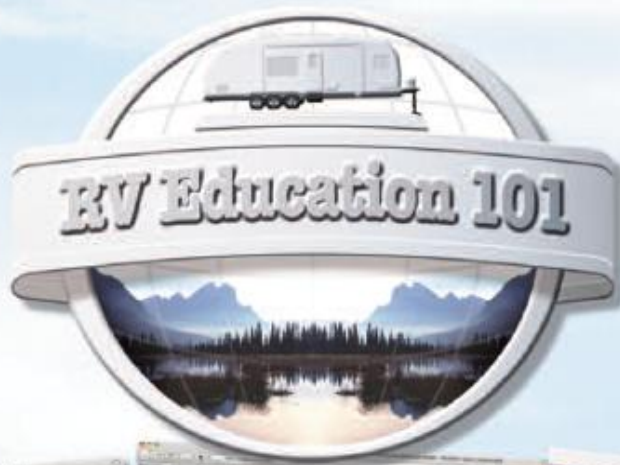
➤ Do not empty gray water or dispose of dish water on the ground. This can hurt our fresh-water sources, like lakes and streams.

- Try to cut back on using 120 volt devices and electronic equipment in the RV. Do whatever you can to help conserve electricity.
- Lots of campgrounds actively participate in recycle programs. If the campground you are staying at has recycle bins make sure your trash and other recyclables get put in the right containers.
- Avoid using paper and Styrofoam products like plates and cups to limit the amount of trash produced and trash going to the landfill.
- Never burn, bury trash or throw it in the fire pit. It's not good for the environment and it can attract some unwanted guests.
- Use recyclable or reusable drinking bottles rather than throwaway bottles. Skip the bottled water. Bring water from home or filter the drinking water in your RV.
- Use your RV awnings and windows to help cool the RV and limit using the RV air conditioner. When you do use the air conditioner keep the filters clean to make it more efficient, and raise the setting as high as possible to keep it comfortable inside.
- Use the sun to dry your swimsuits, towels and other items. This cuts back on washer and dryer use at the campground.
- Use green cleaning supplies in the RV. Makes sure everything going down a drain is biodegradable and environmentally friendly.
- Shop the local economy and buy produce from local farmers. Ask the KOA front office for directions to local shopping areas.



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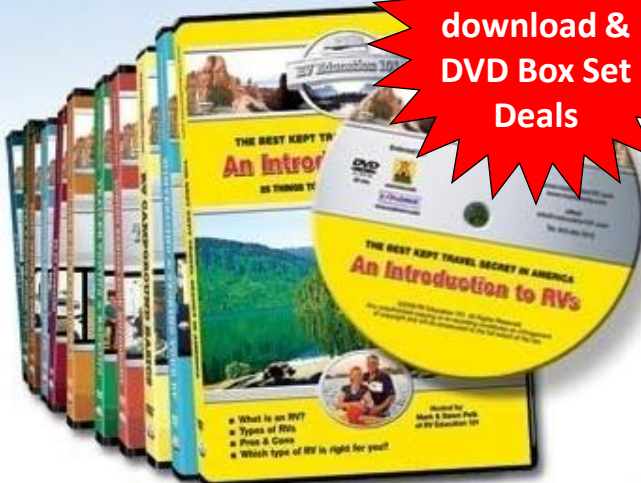


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Our goal with RV Consumer E-Magazine is to provide you with helpful information to make all of your RV experiences more enjoyable. I left my position as an RV Sales and F&I manager in 2000 to start RV Education 101.

We produce RV educational videos & DVDs and publish books and e-books on how to safely & properly use and maintain your RV. The reason I left my job was because of my concern about the lack of educational and safety awareness material available to the RV consumer, in other words you.

My wife Dawn left her position in RV sales to help start the company, and is our Sales and Marketing Director. We currently have a 35-foot Class A motor home. We have two boys, Tyler 18 and Josh 24, both avid RVers and two dogs, Roxie and Gracie .

If you would like to learn more about us and about RV Education 101 please visit [www.rveducation101.com](http://www.rveducation101.com)

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